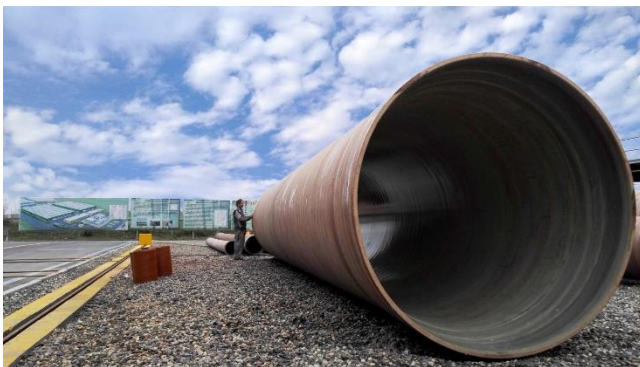


# Bamboo, rattan and the Belt and Road Initiative

Bamboo and rattan are highly compatible with the overall objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative, the global development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 which promotes international infrastructure and trade links.

September 2019

## DEVELOPING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



*Bamboo industrial products. Photo: Engineering Research Centre for Bamboo Winding Composites*

Bamboo's flexibility and lightness make it an excellent construction material. Bamboo bends but rarely breaks, earning it the nickname "vegetal steel" among architects around the world. For the same reason, bamboo fibres can be used in a wide range of infrastructure applications, including the manufacture of panels, beams, flooring, decking, cladding, and even wind turbine blades and drainage pipes.

Because it regrows quickly and matures fast, bamboo can be used as a low- or even negative-carbon alternative to traditional materials. A number of companies across China are already making use of this plentiful resource to replace wood, cement and steel in products.

For these reasons, in the 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, bamboo and rattan were singled out by

Chinese President Xi Jinping as strategic tools for African countries' green economic growth. They are also mentioned in the Beijing Action Plan which resulted from this Forum.

## PROMOTING TRADE

In China, government and private sector investments into bamboo have resulted in significant socio-economic and environmental benefits. From 1981 to 2017, the annual value of the bamboo sector increased from just USD 160 million to USD 30 billion. This has led to the generation of almost ten million formal jobs in the bamboo sector, bringing millions of people out of poverty. There are similar opportunities for other bamboo- and rattan-producing countries along the Belt and Road to develop this sector.

As the Common Fund for Commodities' International Commodity Body for bamboo and rattan, INBAR will continue to promote the global trade of bamboo and rattan commodities through the support of



manufacturing joint ventures, public-private partnerships and pro-poor investment opportunities, and by improving access to the market through the development of universal product standards and appropriate Harmonised System codes.

## PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Bamboos are giant grasses: their extensive root and rhizome systems can bind soil and prevent water runoff. They are used to restore land in areas where the soil has been degraded through industrial use or mining. A number of countries along the Belt and Road currently incorporate bamboo into their land use policies. Bamboo could be a key tool to help maintain soil health in areas of infrastructure and industry development, and to create biodiversity-rich green corridors and noise barriers along highways and railways.

## FOSTERING COLLABORATION



Since its establishment in 1997, INBAR has promoted people-to-people exchanges across its Member States, sharing information and experiences and providing

international training across the bamboo and rattan value chain. So far, INBAR has trained tens of thousands of people in how to manage, harvest and create value-added products with bamboo, as well as how to restore degraded land and use bamboo for carbon storage.

As the first intergovernmental organisation to be based in China, and with many Member States taking part in the Belt and Road Initiative, INBAR is well-placed to help 'green' the Belt and Road in line with several of its focus areas.\* INBAR can play a strategic role to strengthen policy coordination among INBAR Members and partners, to ensure that bamboo and rattan are included in sector policies related to green socio-economic development.

### IN ACTION...

*An increasing number of companies in China are using bamboo composite as a locally sourced, sustainable alternative to traditional timber, steel or plastic. The Zhejiang-based Engineering Research Centre for Winding Bamboo Composites (first page, pictured) has pioneered a method to create durable, high-strength bamboo drainage pipes, and is developing the material to use as train carriage fuselage. And in Fujian, one company is supplying strong bamboo flooring to some of the biggest shipping container companies in the world. Although the company originally used wood, they switched to bamboo because "It is locally sourced, more flexible and the test results were excellent", according to a representative.*

*\*Not all INBAR Member States take part in the Belt and Road Initiative*

## ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL BAMBOO AND RATTAN ORGANISATION

***The International Bamboo and Rattan Organisation (INBAR) is an intergovernmental organisation which promotes the use of bamboo and rattan for sustainable development.***